DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 277 687 SP 028 458

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TITLE Analysis of the Initial Arizona Career Ladder Incentive Programs.
INSTITUTION Northern Arizona Univ., Flagstaff.
PUB DATE [86]
NOTE 12p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Career Ladders; Elementary Secondary Education; Professional Recognition; *Program Development; *Program Implementation; *Teacher Improvement; Teacher Salaries; *Teaching (Occupation)
IDENTIFIERS *Arizona

ABSTRACT

A description is given of a career ladder incentive program that is currently being implemented in nine school districts in Arizona. Advancement to higher career ladder levels is dependent on meeting various criteria established by the individual school district in this program, and salary compensation is based on performance competency. Competency is judged by "input criteria," which refers to the level of functioning of a teacher while engaged in the instructional process. This includes oral presentation and communication as well as teaching strategies and materials. "Output criteria," involves level of student response. Both teacher input and student output criteria are observed through various evaluation procedures, including the use of performance observation instruments, formal and informal tests, and other measurement procedures and scales. The teacher input evaluation criteria for maintenance and/or advancement requirements at the various levels of each career ladder plan are generalized into the following areas: (1) knowledge of subject matter, instructional techniques; (2) professional growth; (3) curriculum skills; (4) inservice/workshop participation; (5) evaluation abilities; (6) supporting experiences; and (7) community service. A description is provided of the implementation features of the program and of proposed program evaluation procedures. (JD)

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ANALYSIS OF THE INITIAL

ARIZONA CAREER LADDER TEACHER INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

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ANALYSIS OF THE INITIAL
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Introduction: Nine Arizona school districts are immersed in the business of educational reform and what makes them different from the rest of the country is that they are submitting their programs to a systematic evaluation over a significant period of five years. This research and program evaluation is being carried out by the Center for Excellence in Education at Northern Arizona University and in 1989, the results will be presented to the State Legislature for decision making purposes (Packard, 1986e).

These districts are accepting this bold challenge for a variety of reasons. They want to improve teaching and attract, retain, and motivate high quality teachers. Many segments of our society are demanding reform and change in the current status of education and in teacher preparation and development. The districts want to be in the forefront in addressing these local, state, and national criticisms. The fact remains that many believe the teaching profession is indeed in serious trouble and these initial pilot districts feel education is much too important not to do something about the concerns and to make needed improvements.

A Troubled Profession: Currently, teaching is not seen as an ideal career choice by college entrants. For example,"In 1966, 26 percent of all university applicants entered the college of education. Only 4.8 percent of university entrants applied to the college of education in 1984" (Flowing Wells Unified School District Career Ladder Plan, 1985). In past years, teaching was viewed as a prestigious career, one which attracted a considerable number of highly qualified individuals. Teaching is now typically seen as having low salaries and low status. As a result, the more academically able individuals tend to opt for careers outside of the profession. Rosenholtz and Smylie (1984) state that, "Efforts to attract more academically able applicants, then, should focus on raising both the base pay for teachers and the social status of teaching."

A Promising Solution: The most recent Commission (1986) meeting on "A Nation at Risk" discusses the issue of needed improvements in education.

SP 028 458

Career ladder teacher incentive programs were a major part of the meeting agenda, and were discussed as one of the most promising avenues in effecting needed reform in education. This comprehensive and "systems approach" seems to be a viable solution if properly done. Career ladder systems generally involve a comprehensive type of teacher incentive plan. The literature (and news sources) is replete with descriptions of various models which are being implemented in several states to determine if well-documented professional problems can satisfactorily be solved (Teacher Incentives, 1984).

THE ARIZONA MODEL

The Historical Perspective: During the first regular session of the Thirty-seventh Legislature, Senate Bill 1336 (1985) was passed to develop and study a full-scale career ladder pilot program. Senate Bill 1384 (1986) is an expansion of S.B. 1336, which includes a major teacher evaluation component influenced by the organized teaching profession. Among several other specifications, the bill (S.B. 1336) established the Joint Legislative Committee on Career Ladders (JLCCL), and Sec. 2 of the bill listed the "Requirements for career ladder plan."

The basic requirements which districts had to meet in order for their plans to be approved by the JLCCL include the following: district teacher consultation, improved student academic achievement, continued professional advancement of teachers, criteria for advancement on career ladder steps, additional (means extended or expanded) responsibilities for teachers, evaluation procedures for teachers, compensation system based on objective performance evaluation, evaluation procedures for principals, and teacher support of career ladder plan.

At this point, Arizona appears to be providing significant leadership in this important venture. This is due to the fact that the "stakeholders" have been reasonably unified in development of the plans. Also, a period of five years is being allocated for the research center to conduct systematic and objective research in order to make appropriate recommendations.

Career Ladders Defined: The Amphitheater Public Schools (1985) defined career ladders as ". . . a hierarchical ordering of levels within a single position where promotion from level to level represents acknowledgement of

increasing competence in the position. As is typical of all Career Ladder Plans (CLPs), the salary schedule is restructured to correspond to each level."

Advancement on the Ladder: Advancement to higher career ladder levels is dependent on meeting various criteria established by individual school districts. One district (Amphitheater, 1985) states, "A teacher's advancement to a higher level on a career ladder requires improved teaching skills combined with other skill development and/or additional responsibilities. . . . Furthermore, salary compensation is based on performance competency, not solely on longevity and academic credits."

Generic Input & Output Criteria. "Input criteria," refers to the level of functioning of a teacher while engaged in the instructional process. This includes oral presentation and communication as well as teaching strategies and materials. "Output criteria," involves level of student response. Both teacher input and student output criteria are observed through various evaluation procedures, including the use of performance observation instruments, formal and informal tests and other measurement procedures and scales.

The categories listed below are from a summary of all nine plans and input criteria are not precise to any one of the unique district CLPs. The teacher input evaluation criteria for maintenance and/or advancement requirements at the various levels of each CLP can be generalized into the following seven areas. A description of the general content of input criteria of those areas follows:

1. Instructional: knowledge of subject matter, planning, instructional techniques, motivation, good rapport with students, individual instruction, communication skills, management skills, study skills.

2. Professional growth: being current with research, sabbatical privileges, publishing, professionalism, development of a professional growth plan, professional growth training, and conducting research.

3. Curriculum: curriculum review, curriculum writing skills, curriculum development, and curriculum evaluation.

4. In-service/workshops: committee work, coordinating special area activities, district training programs, piloting experimental programs, advisory committee work, and planning and/or conducting in-service programs.

5. Evaluation: evaluation of other teachers, curriculum evaluation, evaluation of school programs, evaluation of pilot programs, and evalulation of the career ladder program.

6. Support areas: mentoring, serving as a cooperating teacher for student teachers, peer coaching/sharing, staff development, serving as demonstration teacher, teacher trainer, and role model.

7. Community: serving as a community liaison, legislative liaison, and in other needed public relations areas.

Student Achievement: Arizona law also requires student output criteria to be evaluated (output criteria involves demonstration of some form of student achievement). Plans are not clear as to how this component of the law will be met. Standardized achievement tests may be used, but research standards require that there will be some kind of demonstration on "criterion type" measurement instruments. This would involve criterion measures at the beginning of a period and scores on the same or equivalent evaluation instrument at a later time. This procedure would eliminate comparison of one teacher's class to another. It would recognize the extraneous variables involved, while meeting the goal (or assumption of responsibility) that teachers are responsible for learning change.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION FEATURES

Each district in Arizona formulated teams of staff to assist in the development of their own unique version of career ladders. Each plan reflects that district's characteristics. Following are the implementation features used as identified by the research center and pilot districts:

A. **The Basic Research & Evaluation Goal**: Research and evaluation personnel of the model project of the Center for Excellence in Education, at Northern Arizona University, are studying the degree to which each district is successful in using the legislative guidelines and their own criteria for teacher development and advancement. The Center will then determine the implementation success of each. Model programs will be derived from successful components of each program and made availbale for use by districts interested in making future application.

New districts will most likely want to adopt from (or adapt to) those successful pilot model districts which most closely relate to their own unique community and school characteristics, e.g., urban/rural, large/small, teacher age and experience, financial structure, type of teacher evaluation system, administrative structure, etc.

B. **Career Ladder Goals & Objectives**: Three main areas dominate the reasoning behind the development and implementation of the initial pilot Career Ladder Programs. In the district CLPs, highest priority is predominantly aimed at student academic excellence. This is closely followed by excellence in teaching. A third major goal of CLPs is the enhancement of the teaching profession. The research projection is that this third area is crucial for the success of the first two.

C. **Composition of Career Ladder Planning Committees**: In all nine CLPs, teachers and administrators made up the primary structure of the CLP central planning (or steering) committee. Research has shown ". . . plans developed with the people to be affected by them are more apt to be accepted and supported (Developing Career Ladders in Teaching, 1985)." Community members and other outside consultants were involved in the planning process in a minority of the CLPs.

D. **Upward & Downward Movement**: Each CLP addressed the possibility of upward and downward movement. Criteria such as classroom performance, professional growth, student academic achievement, non-teaching (extended) duties, and self-assessment are reviewed by the evaluators for advancement or demotion purposes. Evaluation responsibilities in the majority of the

approved plans will be assigned to the principal or superintendent. In a few cases, district designated evaluators will be given these responsibilities. These district evaluators will be an instructional management team which might include teachers and/or administrators. Teacher termination, based on the evaluations, is a possibility in over half the districts if a teacher fails to advance from pre-entry levels or fails to eliminate deficiencies which emerged on the evaluation. Most districts have formulated an appeal process to manage any problems/questions that may arise.

E. **About Salaries & Levels**: Each school district has listed salaries for individual levels. A regular salary schedule is available in those districts where participation in the CLP is optional. The majority of the CLPs specified four levels. Average salary range for these levels is:

Level I	18,228 - 23,792
Level II	20,921 - 28,129
Level III	24,902 - 34,826
Level IV	28,452 - 37,243

The lowest salary for the first level is approximately $17,000, and the highest salary reaches the $45,000 mark.

F. **School Communication & Climate**. All districts involved in the career ladder educational reform movement have recognized what some refer to as school environment, school culture, interpersonal relationships (Schmuck & Schumuch, 1974). More often, the literature discusses this area in terms of school climate (Halpin, 1966). Packard (1985b; 1985c; 1986f) has presented research which depicts the fact that business and industry and public organizations (including schools) have recognized for some time that worker performance is enhanced when their basic psychological needs are met, when a system of trust, respect, praise, etc., is recognized and utilized on a planned, system-wide basis. The procedures and types of interpersonal communication, the way in which superiors and personnel interact, is central to morale, motivation and performance (Packard, 1984a).

Evidence indicates that the general (and specific) aspects of "organizational climate" and the success of various components are interrelated where any change in program or organization is concerned. In the text, Developing Career Ladders in Teaching (1985), they state, "In schooling as in ecology, a change in one element of the system affects most of the others. If teachers acquire more status and prestige, more privilege and authority . . . teacher morale and school climate may be affected." Therefore, the research, evaluation, and program improvement cycle (Packard, 1985d) will involve comparisons of success in the area of communication and climate and how well teachers and administrators are able to accept desired educational change and reform.

CONCLUSION

From a research base, there are many questions to be answered before the research project will be able to use career ladder data (and program components) to solve problems. The Arizona Career Ladder Evaluation Team has begun developing and implementating data collection procedures, the first of which involves the "Career Ladder Perception Assessment Scale" (Packard, Bierlein, Aleamoni & Helmstadter, 1986). The Team needs to secure specific answers and results to questions related to increase in student academic achievement, assurance of quality teacher performance, enhancement of the teaching profession, and recruitment, retention, and motivation of high quality teachers (Packard, 1985g). At this point, one thing is clear--the teaching profession requires some major support for reform. The profession itself, the state, and the nation are all looking closely at career ladder teacher incentive programs to determine if this is an answer to some of the pressing concerns about education in this country.

We know that difficulties faced by the teaching profession and a public desire to improve student academic achievement has established the need for implementation and study of teacher competency and incentive programs. The findings of this Arizona study will result in development of a model or models which show promise for recruiting, retaining and motivating high quality teachers.

Arizona has been provided a unique opportunity to develop objective and systematic research for decision making. At this point, the political and professional influences seem to be structured for effecting positive policy change. One of the greatest uniquenesses is the large scale research which is being conducted in the school systems. Historically this has seldom been accomplished in that setting.

If school systems are up to the challange of this required change, the teaching profession will develop in importance, social status and prestige. As a result, the children and students, the reason for these major efforts, will have a chance to significantly benefit. In turn, the State and Nation will meet the "general welfare" implications and responsibilities for excellence in education.

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